



Type: Magazine Article

Biblical Knowledge in Early America

Author(s): Valton E. Jackson and W. Russell Palfreyman

Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 112, No. 5 (May 1950)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 136–137

Abstract: This article quotes exclusively from Dewey Farnsworth's *The Americas before Columbus* and the scriptures (Genesis 49:22-26, John 10:16) to show that American Indians are descended from the House of Israel and were acquainted with biblical stories (e.g., House of Noah, Abraham, Jacob) prior to contact with Europeans.

Biblical Knowledge *in Early America*

SINCE the discovery of the American continent by Columbus, there have been many theories brought forward concerning the peopling of this vast land. Some have assumed that the logical connection between the two hemispheres was through the Bering Straits—that where water now is, there was once land, and that roving Mongolians wandered across and infiltrated into the country, moving gradually southward. This theory has been largely exploded by the findings of archeologists, who all agree that the civilization of the early people of the Americas developed as they moved northward, and suddenly ended in northern Mexico.

How then did they get there? As there is no possibility of another land connection between South America and some other continent, we must turn to the ocean pathways for the solution of this problem. The ocean was a very early and very much used method of travel, and the facts stated above have led the archeologists to conclude unanimously that the oceans furnished the highways for the early people that came to America.

The learned men of today agree that there were two major migrations. They also agree that the first of these came about the time of the building of the Tower of Babel, and the other about 600 BC. The traditions of the surviving race tell of two migrations also. They say the greater and earlier one came from the east, and that the smaller and lesser one came from the west. The Book of Mormon definitely states that there were at least two migrations, that the first took place about the time the Lord confounded the language of all the earth, and that the larger group came from the east.

Because these people came from the

By VALTON E. JACKSON and
W. RUSSELL PALFREYMAN

★

old world, they could have easily been of the House of Israel. If the Book of Mormon is the word of God and the archeologists are correct, then the American Indian is a descendant of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, and as such, should have had some knowledge of events recorded in the Bible.

Did they?

Studies made of these people have definitely shown that at some time they **have had** knowledge of Biblical events. The story of the Flood is widely current among the American Indians. A man, Noach, with certain other people, escaped in a boat filled with various animals and birds. A rainbow is the sign that this will not happen again.”(1) This sacred tradition is a truth found in our own scriptures. “In the course of time a tower was erected for the purpose of reaching the clouds, but the god, incensed at this presumption, destroyed the tower, confused the language of the day and dispersed the people.”(2)

“In the early part of the 18th century, a Dutch Jew, whose name was Aaron Levy, but who wrote under the nom de plume, Montesinus . . . met with a strange people in the northern Andes, of whom he says: ‘My guide was Indian—at least so he seemed to me—and he called his god after the name of the Hebrew God, Adonai. He told me that in very ancient times his forefathers were called Abram, Esaak, and Yakoob; that the name of his own tribe was Rooben. Through him I made the acquaintance of a number of men of his tribe, whom I at once recognised as Jews. They kissed and embraced me as a brother.’(3) From

this, and many other astounding happenings, we find that Jacob and his twelve sons play a prominent part in the legends of the Indians. "Some of the tribes used to build an altar of twelve stones in memory of a great ancestor of theirs who had twelve sons. 'They had traditions that all Indian tribes descended from one man who had twelve sons; that this man was a notable and renowned prince, having great dominion; and that the Indians, his posterity, will yet recover the same dominion and influence.'" (4) The Indians also have their ark, "Seemingly like that of the Old Testament; this the Indians take with them to war; it is never permitted to touch the ground, but rests upon stones or pieces of wood, it being deemed sacrilegious and unlawful to open it or look upon it." (5) "The American priests scrupulously guard their sanctuary, and the High Priest carries on his breast a white shell adorned with precious stones, which recalls the Urim of the Jewish high priest; of whom we are also reminded by a band of white plumes on his forehead." (6)

The Indians are of the House of Israel through Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph. These people are the branch that was to "run over the wall". (7) What wall? The wall of water between the two continents. The Bible contains much of their history. They carried part of these precious truths of their origin with them on the brass plates of Laban, and taught them to the posterity given them in the "land of everlasting hills." (8) Even though the Gospel was lost to them, glimpses of the truth have remained in their legends and folklore.

The Book of Mormon has proclaimed to the world for one hundred and twenty years these truths now being discovered from the dense jungle growth that has kept hidden the wonders of a once mighty civilization.

Jesus Christ bore testimony of the relationships of the Indians to Israel when He said, "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also

I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." (9) He mentioned other sheep, so these people He was referring to must have been of the House of Israel, or He would not have called them sheep. Christ's mission was to the House of Israel, and whenever He spoke of His flock or His sheep, it was always in reference to them. After His resurrection and ascension, Christ appeared to these sheep who lived on the American continent. He said to them, "Ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice—that I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost. But behold, ye have both heard my voice, and seen me; and ye are numbered among those whom the Father hath given me." (10)

The Book of Mormon declares to the world the truth of God's dealings with His chosen people. It explains and clarifies many things about the ancient civilizations which existed on the American Continents. We are not asked to accept it on faith alone. We have the proofs which archeologists and historians are constantly bringing to light. But, more important, we have the promise that Moroni makes that "if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost." (11)

HAVE YOU TRIED IT?

(1) Americas Before Columbus . . . Dewey Farnsworth, page 26. (2) Ibid, page 26. (3) Ibid, page 21. (4) Ibid, page 26. (5) Ibid, page 18—Ark at Jericho, Joshua 6:9. (6) Ibid, page 18. (7) Genesis 49: 22-26. (8) I Nephi 5: 14, 16. (9) John 10: 16 (10) III Nephi 15: 21-24. (11) Moroni 10:4.